

Letters to The Times  
CPYRGHT

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## For Talks on Vietnam

Conference of All Countries Urged  
as Alternative to Policy

*The signers of the following letter are graduate students of East Asian and Communist studies at Columbia University.*

TO THE EDITOR:

It is time for the American Government to consider new initiatives in South Vietnam—diplomatic initiatives, not military.

The basic reason for our presence in Vietnam has been to contain Communist expansion. Toward that end we have supported a series of non-democratic governments with substantial military aid, hoping that the Vietnamese people shared our objectives sufficiently to bear the brunt of the struggle. In the light of recent events this hope appears to be illusory, and the policy based on it untenable. Either we must commit our own soldiers to an extent that matches our objectives or we must attempt to negotiate a peaceful solution.

Few Americans believe that it would be worth our while to fight a major war in Vietnam. After two decades of warfare the Vietnamese themselves are exhausted; understandably, few of them seem to appreciate our motives. To transform what is already a civil war into a war between the United States and North Vietnam merely involves all the dangers of escalation without resolving any of the problems within Vietnam itself.

## Probe for Area of Agreement

The best alternative is immediate United States support for a conference of all countries concerned, in an attempt to restore peace to the Indochinese peninsula by diplomatic means. If diplomatic negotiation reveals an acceptable area of agreement, we should be willing to consider reappraising our security interests.

The "domino theory" is the major argument advanced against negotiations, but it is based largely on fear of Communism rather than on analysis of the vastly different histories and conditions of the countries involved. To consider a limited settlement in Vietnam is not to "lose" Southeast Asia.

There is no easy answer. Willingness to negotiate, however, will give the diplomatic initiative to the United States, and will in no way jeopardize our security. At the present time we are being drawn gradually into a war about which the American people as a whole is apathetic, which is not in defense of a popular or effective government, which lacks the support of our leading allies, and which does not serve the best interests of the United States.

JAMES HARRISON, DAVID KEIGHTLEY,  
STANLEY LUBMAN, JOHN WATT,  
GEORGE FEIFER, PAULINE HO.  
New York, Nov. 29, 1964.

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Date: NOV 19 1964

Winning Strategy Drawn  
For Victory In Vietnam

Editor of the Press Herald:

Your well reasoned editorial of November 9 points the need for fast action in Vietnam.

Have you not noted that the most publicized predictions of a long drawn out struggle come not from the state but from the Defense Department. This gives them a certain authenticity because plans for carrying on the conflict are approved in the Department of Defense.

An inference becomes inescapable that psychology is not included or its uses have been reversed in such plans. Recall only a few illustrations of policy. The secretary said only a few months ago that he was going to withdraw our troops—and the Viet Cong enemy reacted to that encouragement with renewed offensive vigor. American destroyers were taken off for a time from the Gulf of Tonkin patrols after they were attacked the second time—with an inevitable loss of face in the Orient. Nothing much was done about the catastrophic destruction of our bombers. Following a play with internal religious difficulties involving the assassination of a South Vietnamese president, we quietly permitted the publication of a CIA study suggesting a negotiated settlement based

upon neutralization" was allowed without disavowal.

Your quotation from the interview with General Williams contained no alternative to negotiating a "peaceful" settlement. Yet General Taylor, whose ability was credited in the interview, knows better than most the method which proved successful in Korea.

If the government of the United States had the will to do so, we could win without waiting for a molding of political sentiment in the South Vietnamese countryside, a molding which could not take place in any population without effective military defense against nightly enemy harassment. Bombing of North Vietnam might be quite unnecessary. The situations in Korea before the armistice and in Vietnam are not so dissimilar. Using the Korean pattern, all civilians would be moved out of a zone as close as feasible to North Vietnam, and Laos and Cambodia if the situation required, into the interior back of a "farm line" (the popular name in Korea), and a continuous military front would be established within the depopulated area.

Free of Communist interference with local villagers, ground forces would halt all incoming Viet Cong "regular" units and supplies. Without them, guerrillas, spies and all other Communist supporters already in the interior would be rounded up, tried and executed by martial law commanders appointed by General Khanh or his successor.

Which is the better bargain now: victory by direct, practical means, or negotiations?

William E. Barker